Determining Health Information Technology Use by the Transgender Population: A Scoping Review

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Background*:*

Transgender people face many potential barriers in healthcare, such as real or perceived discrimination, inability to pay for healthcare services, and misinformation about transgender health needs. It has been hypothesized that, because of these barriers, transgender people may be more receptive to using health information technology than other populations. The purpose of this scoping review was to understand the ways transgender people use health information technology.

Methods*:*

This scoping review included English studies that addressed use of technology by transgender people in health sciences literature. The inclusion criteria was studies that documented transgender technology use and did not include studies that only focused on technology use by healthcare providers. Included studies were sorted into categories based on the type of technology transgender participants used.

Results*:*

Twenty-nine articles met the study inclusion criteria from an initial pool of 1,276 articles searched from online databases. Many studies were involved with multiple categories. Fourteen articles addressed websites targeting transgender people, twelve included the usage of online social media sites, seven articles involved transgender usage of online surveys, and four articles discussed transgender usage of smartphones in health management.

Conclusion and potential impact:

Twenty-two studies focused on the application of interventions through websites and social media sites, nineteen of which concluded that web-based health information or interventions were feasible methods to affect the health of transgender people. Sixteen studies concluded that online interactions were accepted, if not preferred, by their transgender participants. This review suggests that further integration of online interventions and healthcare information into these mediums may increase transgender engagement in healthcare and reduce healthcare barriers. Future research to improve understanding of the outcomes of health information technology on the health of transgender people would be an asset for treating a historically medically underserved community.